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It is his SAC, in the midst of a rapid transition from bomber to intercontinental ballistic missile, which constitutes almost 90 per cent of the free world's retaliatory force. It must balance the growing missile lead which so many experts have credited to Moscow. It seems certain to remain our strongest weapon until the solid-fueled Polaris and Minuteman are operational and can be counted on to give us a mobile and much stronger defense setup.

Gen. Power spoke freely to the Senators. He said, "As a field commander I feel we should take care of the worst possible situation." Yet he conceded that his superiors might reach different conclusions because the superiors had wider responsibilities than he.

But Gen. Maxwell Taylor, who retired last June as Army Chief of Staff, gave the Senators a different and more alarming reason for the views of these superiors. Enlarging on his recent book, "The Uncertain Trumpet," Gen. Taylor charged that budget-minded civilians had taken over military policy-making. While most of what he said supported Gen. Power's warning that we are growing weaker while Russia grows stronger, Gen. Taylor did disagree with Gen. Power in testifying. "Our manned bomber force is a dwindling military asset." But he did assert it should go on a partial airborne alert, as Gen. Power advocated.

Having so recently been a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Taylor is a witness whose testimony is of the highest importance. His emphasis on the need for ability to fight limited and non-atomic wars as well as nuclear wars echoes the old warning that if we cannot stop limited aggressions in far corners there is a good chance of the free world being devoured piecemeal. There can be little doubt that he is on sound ground in citing the inadequacy of the National Security Council. This highest policy advisory group in the Government apparently has failed so badly in its mission of integrating strategic policies that it has been under a Senate subcommittee investigation since last August.

Gen. Lemnitzer, who succeeded Gen. Taylor in the army post, differed with his predecessor on some points. He thought the United States was in a good position to fight a limited war, for example. But he said the Budget Bureau has refused to permit expenditure of most of 988 million dollars voted by Congress to provide new equipment for American soldiers supporting Gen. Taylor's view of the decisive power exercised by the Budget Bureau.

Although there have been semantics, partisanship, politics and varied interpretation to confuse the issue, it is clear that our defense establishment is not all it should be. Consideration for the budget has caused us to fall behind. As Walter Lippmann commented this week on the Soviets: "Not only did they have a head start but they are now running faster." If we are to catch up, Congress must act decisively. In doing so, it is unconvincing.